

Glossary of Terms

Access Management: A process for providing access to land development while preserving traffic flow on surrounding roadways in terms of safety, capacity, and speed. This is achieved by managing the location and design of access to a roadway.

Activity Centers: A development area that provides a focus for surrounding neighborhoods and promotes land use objectives such as compact, pedestrian-friendly development. Such centers are higher in density and incorporate a wider range of uses than the lower density, predominantly residential areas surrounding them.

Affordable Housing: Housing where the occupants pay no more than 30 percent of their gross income for housing expenses, including utilities. Affordable housing programs are generally targeted to families earning 80 percent or less of the area's median income.

Agricultural District: An area where the continued use of farmland for agricultural production is encouraged through a combination of landowner incentives and protection that are intended to forestall the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses. Article 25-AA of the New York State Agriculture and Markets Law authorizes the creation of local agricultural districts pursuant to landowner initiative, county review, state certification, and county adoption.

Airport Approach Zone: An area surrounding an airport that must be kept free of obstructions to aircraft takeoff and landing.

AIDA: Amherst Industrial Development Agency.

Amherst Tree Law: The Town of Amherst Tree Law adopted in May 1992 as Chapter 179 of the Town Code. The focus of the Tree Law is to maintain and improve the aesthetics and ecological systems of the Town.

Assisted Living Housing: Housing for the elderly that offers services such as daily assistance with personal and household tasks. Also known as long-term care.

Best Management Practices (BMPs): Measures designed to minimize the impacts of stormwater runoff from land development on water quality. Examples include erosion control during construction, preservation of buffers of natural vegetation, and on-site detention of stormwater to filter out pollutants.

Buffer: Landscaping or land use designed to separate or provide a transition between incompatible land uses. See also “Screening.”

Bumpout: A bend in the curb line intended to narrow the travel lane and thereby reduce the speed of vehicles. See also “Traffic Calming.”

Capital Improvements: Permanent additions to the Town’s physical assets including structures, infrastructure (sewer and water lines, streets), and other facilities such as parks and playgrounds. May include new construction, reconstruction or renovation that extends the useful life of these assets.

Capital Improvements Program (CIP): A six-year schedule of major capital improvements based on studies of available fiscal resources. Capital Improvement Programs are an essential part of Amherst’s Debt Management Plan.

Character Corridor: A roadway designated in the Comprehensive Plan as having aesthetic characteristics appropriate to a specific land use and neighborhood pattern: traditional, suburban, commercial, or rural.

Clearing Limits: The maximum area of vegetation to be removed from a site being developed. Clearing limits are intended to minimize the loss of natural vegetation, thus contributing to erosion control, soil retention, and corresponding impacts on water quality.

Cluster Development: Refers to a residential development designed to preserve open space by grouping the homes on a portion of a property only, leaving the remainder as open space. Clustering also allows a developer to develop lots that are smaller than those specified in the zoning ordinance, provided that the land saved is reserved for permanent common uses such as open space or recreation.

Collaborative Planning: An approach to planning that involves numerous groups or individuals working together on planning issues or to prepare a plan.

Collector: A street that collects traffic from local streets and connects with arterials. Collector streets provide for both access and circulation within residential, commercial, and industrial areas. Their access function is more important than that of arterials.

Community Character: The distinguishing identity or elements of a place, neighborhood, or any other part of the Town. See also “Sense of Place.”

Community Commercial Center: An area of development and community activity located at intersections along suburban and commercial highways. These centers are automobile-oriented, serving several neighborhoods and usually providing goods and services that supplement those found in neighborhood centers. These centers are the preferred locations for moderately sized businesses that provide shoppers goods in addition to convenience goods and services, professional offices, and specialty items.

Community Facilities: Services or facilities provided by the Town of Amherst or other public agencies for the benefit of town residents. Examples include parks, police protection, and public schools.

Comprehensive Plan: Refers to this plan, or any portion thereof, as adopted by the Amherst Town Board to manage the quantity, type, cost, location, timing, and quality of development and redevelopment.

Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC): Committee comprised of Planning Board members and representatives of the various community systems that operate within the Town (neighborhood, business, environmental, and other civic interests) that provided overall policy direction for preparation of the Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan.

Connectivity: Term used to describe the number, quality and quantity of connections in the roadway network, which influences the accessibility of potential destinations in a community. Depending on how it is designed, a roadway network may provide one connection or many connections, direct connections or indirect connections, connections for all modes or for selected modes of travel.

Conservation Development: An innovative form of residential development that reduces lot sizes so as to set aside a substantial amount of the property as permanently protected open space.

Differs from Cluster Development in several ways, particularly in its higher standards for the quantity, quality and configuration of the resulting open space.

Conservation Easement: A voluntary legal agreement entered into between a landowner and a qualified conservation organization or a government entity. The easement permanently limits a property's uses in order to protect the land's natural resource values.

Context-Sensitive Design: An approach to urban design that emphasizes collaborative planning with stakeholders to develop solutions that are in keeping with the scale, massing, use, and location of existing conditions.

Density: Gross density refers to the number of families, persons or housing units allocated per gross unit measure of land. Net density is the maximum density permitted to be developed per unit of land after deducting any required open space, easements and publicly dedicated rights-of-way.

Design Standards: A set of criteria established to guide certain aspects of development such as site planning and building design, in order to protect and enhance the character of the area where the development is taking place, as well as of the Town as a whole.

Development Pattern: The configuration or organization of the built environment.

Development Regulation: Governmental regulation of the use and development intensity of land, including zoning, subdivision regulations, site plan, official map, or floodplain management.

Development Review Process: The process by which development regulations are applied to specific proposed development projects.

Development Standards: Site design regulations such as lot area, height limits, frontage, landscaping, and yards – as distinguished from use restrictions.

Diverse Economy: Economy in which employment is generated by multiple economic activities.

Diversity: Refers to the differences among groups in terms of age, gender, culture, race, ethnicity, income, religion or disability.

Eggertsville Action Plan: Plan prepared in 2000 that identifies short-term actions needed to revitalize commercial areas in Eggertsville. The Plan identifies barriers to redevelopment that have constrained investment and revitalization. Recommendations for code amendments, conceptual capital projects, and financing options are provided to encourage public and private investment. Many of these recommendations have been incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan.

Expressway: Roadway devoted entirely to traffic movement with little or no direct land service function. Expressways are multilane, divided roads with controlled access and few, if any, intersections at grade. Expressways serve large volumes of high-speed traffic and are primarily intended to serve commuters or long trips within and between metropolitan areas.

Farmland Protection Program: Program authorized under Article 25-AAA of the New York State Agriculture and Markets Law in which state assistance payments are available to municipalities to assist with the total costs for the purchase of development rights on viable farmland.

Fill: Soil that has accumulated or is disposed of at a site and has the effect of raising the ground elevation, or that is deliberately added to a site to improve its suitability for construction.

Fiscal Impact Assessment: An analytical technique used to determine the effects of a particular proposal on the local government's revenues and expenditures.

Floodplain: Low and generally flat land areas adjoining a body of water that often floods or has the potential of flooding. The 100-year floodplain is the area that has a one percent probability of flooding in any given year.

Floodway: The portion of a one hundred-year floodplain consisting of a river channel or other watercourse and any adjacent land area required by federal, state, or local requirements to remain open and unobstructed. In Amherst, floodways are designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Focal Area: An area within the Town of Amherst that has been identified as in need of special attention due to a combination of unique characteristics, susceptibility to change, and importance to the future of the Town. The Comprehensive Plan identifies six

such areas: Northwest Amherst, North Amherst, University, Eggertsville, Snyder, and Williamsville.

Focal Area Plan: A plan prepared as a guide for public policy regarding land use and development in a specific planning area of the Town.

Functional Classification: The hierarchy of road classes that divides roads by purpose and design. The determination of classification is a combination of the function of the road, control of access, spacing of roads of a similar nature, length and linkages to other roads and major land uses. See “Expressway,” “Major Arterial,” “Minor Arterial,” “Collector,” “Local Collector,” and “Local Street.”

Gateway: Refers to any major points or course of arrival into the Town or into a particular area of the Town, such as a neighborhood or business district or coastal area. Gateways can mark the physical entrance to the area, or the location where most people would feel they have entered an area.

Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC): Interagency transportation planning group that establishes policies and programs for Erie and Niagara Counties.

Goal: Refers to a concise but general statement of a community’s direction in addressing a problem or an opportunity, in terms of a desired state or process toward which implementation programs are oriented.

Greenfield Development: Development on land that has previously never been built on.

Greenway: A continuous linear corridor of open space that links recreational, cultural, and natural focal points and lands. Greenways may be undeveloped or may feature walking/biking paths or town and utilities rights-of-way. See also “Open Space.”

Historic District: An area defined by its historic, prehistoric, architectural and/or cultural significance. In Amherst, the term refers to a National Historic Register-listed district.

Historic Resource: Sites, structures, properties, or districts that are important to the cultural heritage of the community.

Household: A household includes all the persons who are current residents of a housing unit. The occupants may be a single family, one person living alone, two or more families living together, or a group of related or unrelated persons who share living arrangements.

Housing Choice: Refers to the availability of a variety of types and locations of housing. Housing can vary according to size (e.g., number of rooms or stories), styles (e.g., construction frame, etc.), type (e.g., single-family versus duplex or multi-family), location, price, and other characteristics.

Housing Unit: A house, an apartment, a group of rooms or a single room occupied as separate living quarters or, if vacant, intended for occupancy as separate living quarters.

Impervious Cover: Surfaces such as concrete or asphalt-paved streets or parking lots that prevent rainfall from infiltrating the soil and can increase the amount of runoff.

Incentive: An inducement provided by the Town or other government agency to encourage development of a certain type or in a certain area. Examples include special status for processing applications, providing land, paying for infrastructure, density bonuses, etc.

Indicator: A measurement of particular conditions or specific actions that reflect the status of a larger system's operation. Commonly used to monitor progress in achieving plan development objectives.

Infill Development: Development of vacant or underutilized properties within a predominantly built-up neighborhood or commercial area.

Infrastructure: The basic facilities and equipment necessary for the effective functioning of the Town, such as the means of providing water service, sewage disposal, electric and gas connections, and the street network.

In-Lieu Payment: Refers to a regulatory provision whereby a developer of a project may make a financial contribution to meet the goals of certain Town programs, instead of constructing the project itself to meet these goals.

Intensity: The degree to which land is used, generally a ratio that measures the type and amount of land used by the total amount of land devoted to that use.

Inventory and Analysis Report: Report prepared in 2001 during Phase 2 of Comprehensive Plan development that documents and evaluates current conditions and trends that will affect Amherst's future. Available at: www.amherst.ny.us (keyword: comprehensive)

Joint Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (JLWRP): Program that provides the Towns of Amherst and Pendleton with a coordinated plan for the future of the Erie Canal/Tonawanda Creek waterfront and its adjacent upland area. It will ensure protection of its natural, recreational, and historic resources and maximize waterfront opportunities for visitor use.

Landscaping: The practice of arranging plant materials – including ground cover, shrubs, and trees – along with other natural or man-made elements, such as rocks and fencing, as a means of enhancing some portion of the built or natural environment.

Land Use: A description and classification of how land is occupied or utilized, e.g., residential, office, parks, industrial, commercial, etc.

Level of Service (LOS): The quality and quantity of existing and planned public services and facilities, rated against an established set of standards to compare actual or projected demand with the maximum capacity of the public service or facility in question. Typically applied to highways.

Local Collector: Street that distributes lower volumes of traffic from predominantly residential developments to collector streets and arterials. A local collector carries through traffic, but at lower volumes than collectors.

Local Street: Streets that provide for local traffic with the highest level of property access and the lowest level of mobility.

Low-Income Housing: Housing which is affordable to households with incomes 50 percent or less of the median income of a given area, as determined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Low Impact Development: An approach to managing stormwater runoff that minimizes disturbance of natural areas, reduces the amount of impervious surfaces (buildings and pavement), and, to the extent possible, infiltrates stormwater on site. See also “Stormwater Management.”

Major Arterial: High volume roadway that carries the major portion of daily trips to centers of activity in the metropolitan area. A major arterial places a greater emphasis on mobility rather than access to land and includes fully and partially controlled access facilities.

Minor Arterial: Street that connects and augments the major arterial system. Although its main function is still traffic mobility, a minor arterial performs this function at a somewhat lower level and places more emphasis on land access than does a major arterial.

Median Family Income: The median income of any group of two or more people who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption, and who reside together in one housing unit.

Median Household Income: The median income of an individual or a group of people, whether related or not, who share a housing unit.

Median Income: Income distribution that is divided into two exactly equal parts, one having incomes above the median and the other having incomes below the median. For households and families, the median income is based on the distribution of the total number of units including those with no income.

Mitigation: Actions or measures taken to lessen, alleviate or decrease the impacts or effects of certain development activities.

Mixed-Use: Refers to development projects or zoning classifications that provide for more than one use or purpose within a shared building or development area. Mixed-use development may allow the integration of commercial, retail, office, medium to high-density housing, and in some cases light industrial uses. These uses can be integrated either horizontally or vertically in a single building or structure.

Mode: Refers to each of the various forms of transportation, such as automobile, transit, ship, bicycle and walking.

Multi-modal Transportation: A transportation system that uses a variety of modes to transport people and goods. Components of the system may include vehicular roadways, transit (bus, rail), bikeways, pedestrian paths (sidewalks, trails), freight railways, and airplanes.

Multi-Use Trail: Improved, paved paths with amenities such as shelters, water fountains and signs. These paths are active recreational facilities that are regularly maintained and patrolled by public safety officials.

Natural Trail: Unimproved, publicly accessible corridors that traverse the Town and can serve as connections between public facilities such as schools and parks, and within recreation areas and neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Commercial Center: An area of development and activity located at highway intersections along traditional, suburban and commercial highways. These centers are primarily pedestrian-oriented with accommodations for automobiles and are the preferred locations for smaller businesses that provide goods and services to meet the daily needs of residents in one or more surrounding neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Conservation: Policies and actions taken to maintain or enhance the stability and viability of Amherst's neighborhoods and the important contributions they make towards the Town's quality of life.

New Community District (NCD): Town of Amherst land use classification established in the 1970s through a contract between the Town of Amherst and the New York State Urban Development Corporation (now Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC) to accommodate development supporting the New York State University at Buffalo North Campus.

NYSDEC: New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

NYSDOT: New York State Department of Transportation.

Open Space: Publicly or privately owned land that is not intensively developed devoted to uses characterized by vegetative cover or water bodies, such as agricultural uses, pastures, meadows, parks, recreational areas, lawns, gardens, cemeteries, ponds, streams, etc.

Peak Hour: Morning and afternoon time periods when the highest number of vehicles found to be passing over a section of road or through an intersection during 60 consecutive minutes.

Pedestrian-Friendly: Term used to describe development patterns and roadway systems that are conducive to walking by providing safe and efficient accommodations for pedestrians. Also known as pedestrian-oriented.

Permanent Open Space: Undeveloped land protected from future development through dedication as open space or other legal mechanisms, such as conservation easements.

Planned Residential District (PRD): Town of Amherst residential zoning district intended to promote more creative, flexible design than is generally possible under conventional residential zoning districts, including variety in housing types, mixed uses, and open space preservation.

Property Maintenance Code: Amherst Town Code Chapter 151, Property Maintenance, which establishes a procedure for securing or removing damaged or deteriorated buildings and structures and ensuring property maintenance.

Public Land: Refers to land owned by the Town of Amherst, or any other governmental entity or agency thereof.

Public Transportation: Transportation by bus, rail, or other conveyance, either publicly or privately owned, which provides to the public general or special service on a regular and continuing basis. Also known as “mass transportation,” “mass transit” and “transit.”

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR): A voluntary program typically used by governmental jurisdictions to maintain land in agricultural or conservation uses by compensating private landowners for the value of the development rights on the property. PDRs allow properties to remain in private ownership without being developed in the future.

Quality of Life: The total experience of community life consisting of a series of factors, both tangible and intangible, such as: economic vitality, public safety, education, housing, environment, recreation, arts and culture, and community character.

Redevelopment: Refers to public and/or private investment made to re-create the fabric of an area, replacing or rehabilitating old buildings or infilling development on vacant parcels. Redevelopment can help to meet market needs for residential and/or commercial development in older parts of the Town, but needs to be carefully managed.

Regional: Pertains to activities or economies beyond those of Amherst's borders, and affecting a broader geographic area which, for the purposes of the Comprehensive Plan, include all of the cities, towns, and villages in Erie and Niagara Counties.

Regional Commercial Center: Commercial center that provides retail goods and services in full range and variety, drawing from a large population base. Land uses in these centers are generally automobile-oriented, including full-line department stores, grocery stores, auto-oriented businesses, automobile sales and service, and other larger-scale single building businesses, and offices.

Rezoning: Process by which the Amherst Town Board changes or modifies the authorized zoning district designation of a property.

Right-to-Farm Laws: Laws intended to protect farmers from nuisance lawsuits. The statutes help support the economic viability of farming by discouraging neighbors from filing lawsuits against agricultural operations.

Sanitary Sewer System: A sewerage system designed to receive, carry, and treat wastewater from homes, businesses, and industry.

Scale: Term that describes the size of a project as it relates to its surrounding environment. Appropriately scaled development is consistent or complementary in terms of size and mass with the existing surroundings and highways.

Screening: The use of landscape planting, fences or other structures to obscure vision of an unsightly or undesirable land use, to prevent outdoor lighting from intruding on neighboring property or to create privacy. See also "Buffer."

Sediment: A solid material, such as dirt or minerals, that tends to collect in certain areas, particularly in water bodies, causing damage, pollution, or the need for expensive maintenance.

Sense of Place: The sum of attributes of a locality, neighborhood, or property that give it a unique and distinctive character. See also "Community Character."

Setback: The required distance between the structure and each of the property/lot boundaries.

Snyder Business District Plan: Study undertaken in 2002 of the historic business area centered at the intersection of Harlem Road and Main Street. The Plan is intended to identify a number of key areas where stakeholders can focus their attention to obtain maximum results over the short term.

Stormwater Management: Refers to the natural and/or constructed features of a property which function to treat, collect, convey, channel, hold, inhibit, or divert the movement of surface water.

Strategy: The approach and/or methods through which problems are solved or minimized, and objectives are achieved.

Tax Abatement: A partial or total tax exemption for a particular development project for a specified number of years, aimed at providing indirect financial assistance to an organization or individual in order to gain a public benefit.

Tax Base: The total value of real property within the Town or other taxing district on which a property tax can be levied.

Traditional Commercial Center: An established commercial area that is pedestrian-oriented and defined by its close proximity to surrounding highways and residences.

Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND): An approach to design that is emerging as an alternative to single-use, automobile-oriented development. Based upon characteristics predominant in pre-World War II communities, typical features of TND design include: interconnected, pedestrian-oriented street systems; places to shop and work and public/institutional uses such as a school, park, or church within walking distance of residences; and coordination with transit service. Also known as neo-traditional design.

Traffic Calming: An integrated approach to traffic planning that seeks to maximize mobility, while reducing the undesirable effects of that mobility. To achieve this goal, Traffic Calming applies a variety of techniques such as altering road design to change the psychological feel of the road and reduce travel speed; providing incentives for more people to use public transportation; and focusing planning on the creation of viable, compact communities.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR): A regulatory technique designed to protect sensitive land areas by allowing the development rights on properties in such areas (“sending zones”) to be transferred to properties in designated “receiving zones,” which are allowed to be developed at a higher density than otherwise would be permitted by the underlying zoning.

Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21): Enacted by Congress in June 1998, TEA-21 continues and expands a wide range of federal-aid programs that have encouraged trails, as well as other elements of the transportation policies begun in the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Equity Act (ISTEA).

Urban Design: A design process that treats the development of the built environment in a comprehensive manner as a means of achieving a unified, efficient and aesthetically appealing physical setting.

Use: The specific activity or function for which land, a building, or a structure is designated, arranged, occupied, regulated or maintained.

Vision Statement: A shared expression of community values and aspirations. The Comprehensive Plan’s Vision Statement provides a “word picture” that defines community expectations for the future, frames the mandate for Plan policies and action programs, and provides the benchmark to measure progress in implementing the Plan.

Waterfront Activity Center: Location along the Erie Canal and Tonawanda Creek where mixed-use development is encouraged that celebrates the waterfront and the area’s heritage, attracts local residents and visitors, and provides access to the water, including boating services. These locations are as defined in the Joint Local Waterfront Development Plan (JLWRP) for Amherst and Pendleton.

Watershed: A catchment area defined by the topography of the ground surface that drains to a watercourse or contributes flow to a body of water.

Wetland: Land area that is sufficiently saturated by surface water or groundwater as to be able to support vegetation or aquatic life requiring saturated soil conditions for at least part of the year. In Amherst, the NYSDEC has designated and regulates over 1,500 acres of wetland. In addition, Federal jurisdictional wetlands (U.S.

Fish & Wildlife Service and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) are delineated on a case-by-case basis.

Wetland Mitigation: Creation of a new wetland of equal or greater value when an existing wetland must be filled. This can either be done directly through the creation of a new wetland or by the purchase of credits from a party that has already established a wetland (referred to as a wetland mitigation bank).

Zoning: Regulatory mechanism through which the Town regulates the location, size, and use of properties and buildings. Zoning regulations are intended to promote the health, safety and general welfare of the community, and to lessen congestion, prevent overcrowding, avoid undue concentration of population, and facilitate the adequate provision of transportation, water, sewage, schools, parks, and other public service.

